Black Days, Black Dust: The Memories Of An African American Coal Miner

By Robert Armstead

Univ Tennessee Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 255 pages. Dimensions: 9.0in. x 6.1in. x 0.8in. Among those drawn to jobs in the booming West Virginia coal mines during the first part of the twentieth century were thousands of African Americans. They proved successful in this industry despite low wages and discrimination at the hands of mine operators. This book, the first published memoir by an African American coal miner, is a stirring tale of survival and achievement. Bob Armstead interweaves stories of family and community with a broad history of underground mining to paint an engrossing picture of the work, the dangers, and the drama of that industry. Armstead remembers his childhood, growing up in a segregated coal camp during the Great Depression, and he recalls his family’s efforts to confront economic challenges while also dealing with the reality of racism. His father worked as a horse driver in the mines until machinery put him out of work. Even though, as a youth, Armstead saw how his father had suffered, he himself went to work in the mines in 1947. From his first day on the job, coal mining fascinated him. He initially labored in a timber crew, shoring up mine roofs. Then,...

Reviews

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